DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 302 FL 008 635

AUTHOR Borgstrom, Lena; And Others
TITLE Elementary Education in English for Adults. Report No. 12.
INSTITUTION Pedagogical Centre, Stockholm (Sweden).
SPONS AGENCY National Swedish Board of Education, Stockholm.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 41p.; Best copy available
AVAILABLE FROM Pedagogical Centre, Fack, S-104 35 Stockholm 23, Sweden

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Dropouts; *Adult Education; *Adult Students; Course Content; *English (Second Language); Interviews; Language Instruction; *School Surveys; Second Language Learning; *Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; *Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a project which, among other points, investigated the following: (1) the content and design of the education offered to adults of limited schooling; (2) student and teacher attitudes toward the content and design of this education; and (3) the characteristics of those students who continue, and of those who discontinue, their studies. The survey population comprised 1,126 adults studying elementary school English, mathematics and Swedish in the evening, and 53 teachers. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. Findings include: (1) most of the students in this type of program are women; (2) age of both men and women varies widely; (3) the median age of the teachers is lower than that of the students; (4) direct teaching and speaking practice are not as frequent as desired; and (5) the serious problem of drop-outs is most likely due in many cases to negative reaction to the teaching methods. (Author/AM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

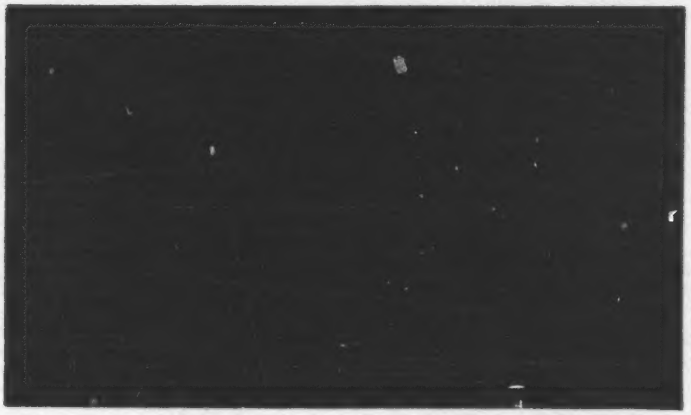
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED139302

GRUNDSKOLESTUDIER FÖR VUXNA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Pedagogiskt centrum vid Stockholms skolförvaltning
Sektionen för vuxenpedagogik och folkbildning

Postadress
Fack
104 35 STOCKHOLM 22

Gatuadress
Rödabergsskolan

Telefoner
08-33 07 90

FL00835

Report no 12

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ENGLISH FOR ADULTS

A summary report from the GRUV-project

1976

© Pedagogical centre, Stockholm, Lena Borgström, 1976

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES II

LIST OF FIGURES II

PREFACE III

AIMS OF THE STUDY 1

Background 1
Purpose 2
Survey population 2
Disposition of the survey 3

RESULTS 3

A. Description of the participants 3

Sex, age, marital status 4
Schooling 6
Employment 7
Motives for studying 9
Results of initial achievement tests 10

B. The teachers' descriptions of the instruction 13

I. The questionnaire study 13

Teachers' views of the overriding aims of adult education 14
Work in the classroom 15

a. The goals of English teaching 15
b. Allocation of time between different subject items 16
c. Working methods 17

Desiderata from teachers concerning the teaching of English 18

II. The interview survey 20

Teaching and its results 20
Problems
Changes occurring during the course 25

C. Student opinions of the teaching 27

D. Drop-outs 29

Drop-out rates 30
Causes of drop-outs 31

Interviews of students who discontinued their studies during the first term 31
Interviews of students who discontinued their studies during the second term 32
Conclusions 33

E. Summary 34

APPENDIX 35

LIST OF TABLES

1. Average ages of adult students (median figures).

2. Means and standard deviations of groups who had just concluded the various grades of adult education (word knowledge and grammar).

3. Allocation of time between teaching aims. A comparison of the first and second terms.

4. Allocation of time between subject items. Comparison of the first and second terms.

5. Working methods.

6. Teachers' assessments of student achievement with reference to the goals of teaching. No. teachers: 25.

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Survey population, autumn term 1973; by sex and age.
No. men: 163 No. women: 513

2. Survey population, spring term 1974; by sex and age.
No. men: 135 No. women: 315

3. Means and standard deviations in Tests A and B for groups in the spring term 1974.

4. Drop-out rates.

PREFACE

One of the purposes of the GRUV-project is to investigate the following aspects of elementary school courses in municipal adult education:

- The content and design of instruction
- Instruction as experienced by students and teachers

The following report is a summary of findings from surveys of the teaching of English. For complete documentation, reference is made to the reports listed in the Appendix.

The GRUV-project is being carried out at the Pedagogical Centre in Stockholm (PCS) and is financed via Division L3 of the National Board of Education, which has also financed the translation of this report into English. Translator: Roger Tanner.

Stockholm, 1976-09-25

Members of the GRUV-project

LENA BORGSTRÖM BIRGER BROMSJÖ

HANS JONSSON KRISTINA OLSSON

ANITA SVENSSON

AIMS OF THE STUDY

Background

Municipal adult education has now existed since 1968. The tendencies discernible so far are that the people who have utilised this opportunity of further education have above all been relatively young and well educated. This can be said to agree quite well with the target group envisaged in 1967, when proposals were put forward for a reform of adult education. In Report VI of the Upper Secondary School Committee, "Adult Education in Gymnasium and Continuation School" (1965), which formed the basis of the 1967 Government Bill concerning the reform of adult education, adult education was primarily regarded as supplementary schooling. The principal group in mind consisted of students who had wanted to change their direction of study during youth education but, owing to a certain rigidity in the system, had been unable to do so.

Subsequent Bills (1970:35, 1971:37) reveal a change of emphasis in that the principal target group now is persons with a shorter period of schooling behind them. This change is due to an increasing realization of the educational gap existing between and within different generations.

The guidelines for the design and organization of municipal adult education were laid down in the 1967 Government Bill for the reform of adult education and in the Municipal Adult Education Ordinance (SFS 1967:452). However, the Bill says nothing about people with limited schooling. Clearly this category was not envisaged when, in 1967, it was decided that the new system of adult education was to be organized on much the same lines as youth education: studies were to lead up to a final certificate and were to follow the same syllabi as in youth education, though the number of periods was to be considerably smaller. For lack of any alternatives, use has also been made to a considerable extent of the teaching materials of youth education.

Purpose

Little of the research which has been done so far into adult education has focussed on people with limited schooling, so that our knowledge of this group is restricted. The project entitled Comprehensive School Studies for Adults is aimed at evaluating the benefit which students with a short period of formal education behind them can derive from this teaching, what difficulties they encounter and what changes are considered desirable. A knowledge of this group is essential in order for people with limited schooling to be offered adequate facilities within the framework of municipal adult education.

With the above purpose in mind, we aim among other things to investigate the following points:

- What are the content and design of the education offered, in the form of municipal adult education, to people with limited schooling?

- How do participants and teachers respectively experience the content and design of this education?

- What are the characteristics of those who complete and those who discontinue their studies, with regard to study situation, study results etc.?

Survey population

The survey population comprises persons studying elementary school English, mathematics and Swedish. These subjects have been chosen because they are "big" subjects, having the largest numbers of participants at comprehensive school level. Some limitation of the survey population being inevitable, only evening students have been included.

For various reasons the term "people with limited schooling" has been expanded to include everybody attending subject courses at comprehensive school level:

- This approach is ethically attractive. Our survey refers to entire groups and there is no need to single out those students who may have the weakest educational background.

- Most of the people attending adult upper secondary schools in Stockholm and who have previously had 6, 7 or 8 years' elementary schooling are now studying at comprehensive school level.

The following report deals with the findings obtained in a survey of English studies.

Disposition of the survey

The teaching groups covered by the survey will be followed for the number of terms normally taken by their courses. At the start of a course, data are collected concerning the members' backgrounds, their reasons for studying etc.

Teachers are asked to furnish particulars concerning the way in which they plan and conduct their teaching, and they are also asked to give their opinions of the course and of difficulties that have arisen.

Students discontinuing their studies are contacted in order to

- compare the attitudes shown to teaching by those who discontinue their studies and those who continue.

- establish (if possible) the reasons for the discontinuation of studies.

Material is collected by means of questionnaires and interviews.

RESULTS

A. Description of the participants

A questionnaire has been distributed to all evening class students joining first-term English courses at comprehensive school level in the autumn term 1973 and the spring term 1974 at adult high schools in Stockholm. This questionnaire contained questions concerning

background, previous education, employment, purpose of studies etc. It was distributed in the course of personal visits to classes, and at the same time students and teachers were told about the purpose of the survey and the way in which it was organized. Most students completed the questionnaire during lesson time. Altogether the questionnaire was completed by 1,126 adult students in 74 groups, giving a response of 89 per cent.

Sex, age, marital status

Of the 1,126 adult students included in the survey, 26 per cent are men and 74 per cent women. The proportion of men was somewhat greater (30 per cent) in the spring term of 1974 than in the autumn term 1973 (24 per cent). Comparing Swedes and immigrants (the latter comprised 17 per cent of the survey population), one finds that the immigrant group contains a far larger proportion of men (44 per cent).

On average the adult students are about 41 years old, though the women are a few years older than the men, while immigrants are generally far younger than Swedes. Table 1 shows the median ages of the various groups.

Table 1. Average ages of adult students (median figures)

Students surveyed	Autumn term 1973			Spring term 1974		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Swedes	40,8	41,9	41,6	42,6	43,6	43,4
Immigrants	33,5	35,1	34,5	33,6	34,8	34,2
Total	39,3	41,1	40,6	39,3	42,3	41,4

Figures 1 and 2 show the sex and age structure of the survey population.

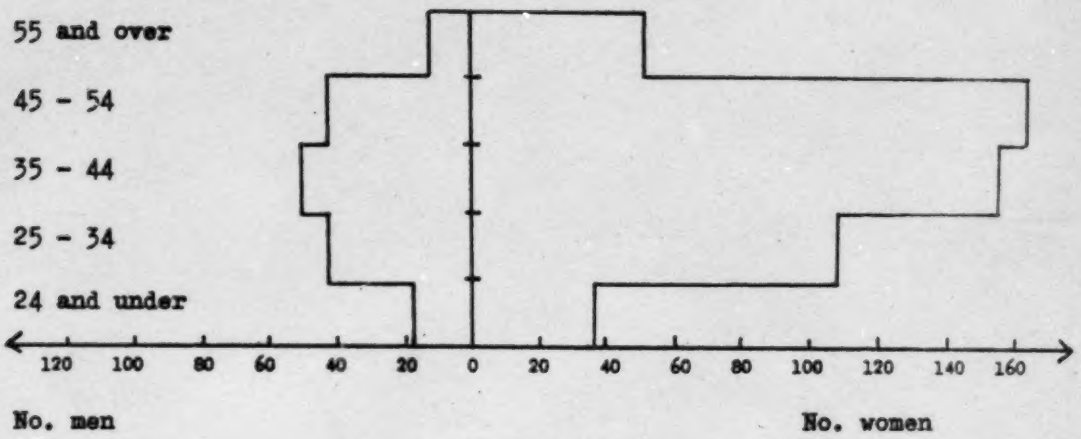


Figure 1. Survey population, autumn term 1973; by sex and age.
No. men: 163 No. Women: 513

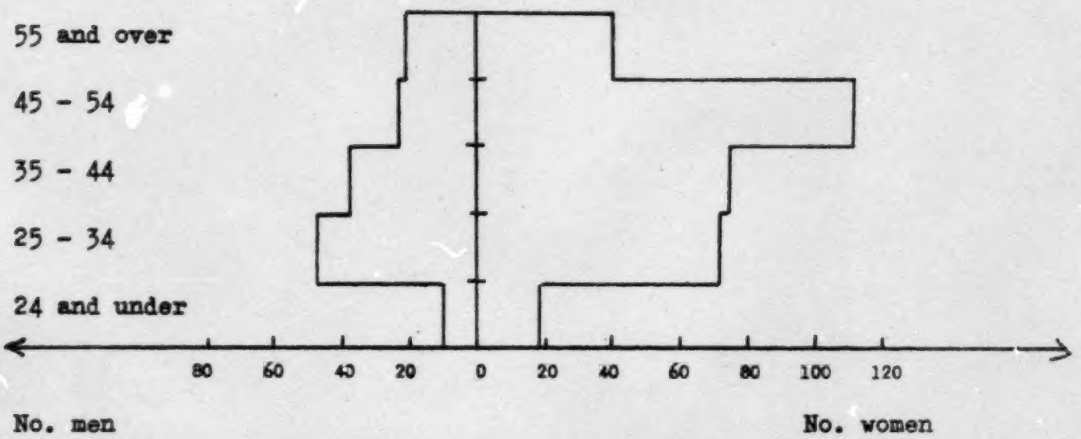


Figure 2. Survey population, spring term 1974; by sex and age.
No. men: 135 No. women: 315

As can be seen from the above figures, the age structure of the male population varied somewhat between the two terms. The age groups from 25 to 54 are more or less equally represented in the autumn, but in the spring term the 25-34 group was largest and there were also a relatively large number of students aged between 35 and 44. As mentioned earlier, women are on average somewhat older than the men, and this is also apparent from the figures. Women between the ages of 35 and 55 predominated in the autumn. At the time of the spring survey, the 45-54 age group bulked largest.

Most of the students were married or cohabiting, and half of them had children. The majority of men and women between the ages of 35 and 44 had children. It was less common for younger students (under 25) and senior students (55 and over) to have children of the age under consideration.

Most parents had one or two children (M=1,5). Almost half of the children were under twelve, but only a few (18 per cent) were below school age.

Schooling

Most of the students (over 75 per cent) had only attended the unreformed elementary school, usually for 6 or 7 years. Discontinued junior secondary school studies were another common educational background. Practically all the students had been happy at school, and most of them thought that compared with the rest of the class they were of average ability. About 25 per cent belonged to the top one-third. Most of the students would have liked to have continued their studies. Their reasons for not continuing were:

1. Had to start work (about 50 per cent)
2. Wanted to start work (about 25 per cent)
3. No schools where I lived
4. Was not interested in studying.

Employment

Our findings suggest that the people included in our survey form a stable group in the labour market. No more that 16 per cent of the gainfully employed students had had more than one type of job in the past three years. Their mobility between different work places was also low; 78 per cent had had the same employer during the past three years and 16 per cent had had two employers during that period. Only 6 per cent had had three or more different jobs. Few of them had been unemployed during the period in question.

Students took the following views of their jobs:

- independent 60 per cent
- responsible 43 " "
- stimulating 49 " "
- mentally tiring 25 " "
- physically tiring 19 " "
- monotonous 17 " "

Most of the students refer to their jobs solely in positive terms. Half of those stating that their work allows them independence also state that it is stimulating and involves responsibility. A small number had only negative observations to make concerning their jobs, while others gave a combination of positive and negative opinions. At the same time as they stated that their jobs allowed them independence, some students also found that their work was mentally tiring, while a small number found it monotonous and physically tiring.

One question put to gainfully employed students concerned their work satisfaction. Half of them replied that they were very happy and just over 40 per cent that they were fairly happy with their present jobs. Thus the proportion of students who were not happy in their work is very small (barely 10 per cent).

Altogether 118 persons, 10 per cent of the survey population, are home-makers. All of them are women. Their reasons for staying at home are that they want to be at home to look after their children, that they like being at home or that they cannot find the jobs they would like.

Practically all occupational sectors are represented among the sample population. The men are not confined to certain occupational sectors to the same extent as the women. Altogether seven different occupational sectors are each represented by at least 5 per cent of the men, and 60 per cent of the men are employed in one or other of the following seven sectors:

- engineer/technician 17 %
- craftsman 9 %
- commercial occupations 9 %
- transport and communications 7 %
- clerical work/accounting 6 %
- building and construction 6 %
- mechanical engineering 6 %

Most of the women (74 per cent) are to be found in the following three occupational sectors:

- clerical work/accounting 50 %
- nursing and welfare 18 %
- commercial occupations 7 %

Comparing the participants' vocational training, we find that the two commonest alternatives agree with the occupational sector in the case of both men and women.

The majority of gainfully employed participants are unwilling to study full time, for the following reasons among others:

1. Want to keep my job because I like it.
2. Am not prepared to accept the lower economic standard it would imply.
3. It would be too much of a risk as regards my chances of getting another job afterwards.
4. Don't dare to, because I don't know if I can stand the pace.
5. I consider employment the best way of financing my studies.

Motives for studying

As a rule our students do not take other subjects. Only about 10 per cent are reading another subject. The majority have not been to adult high school before; instead they have attended courses arranged by the voluntary adult education associations. Their reasons for studying have usually included the following:

1. To improve my general knowledge.
2. I like studying.
3. It makes a nice hobby.
4. It helps me to meet other people.
5. It helps me to keep up with the children´s school work.

The answers from the two terms agree quite well with each other. Some of the students are studying to improve their qualifications, while the majority give other reasons, such as a desire to improve their general knowledge or a fondness for studying. But there are certain differences between men and women where motives are concerned. It is more common for the men to give such reasons as "to cope better with my job" or "to get a job that does more justice to my ability". Women on the other hand have tended more than men to give such reasons as "general knowledge", "like studying", "nice hobby" and "keep up with the children´s school work".

We have also classified the answers to this question according to the students´ ages. We found that the younger students, i.e. those under 35, tended more often than their seniors to say that they were studying with a view to changing jobs. This applies to both men and women. On the other hand the contrary reason, "to cope better with my job", was given more often by the over-35´s than by the younger students.

Results of initial achievement tests

We gave the students two tests in order to gauge their level of ability. These (standardized) tests have been compiled in order to help adult students about to embark on basic English studies an opportunity of appraising their initial ability and thus finding the appropriate level at which to begin their studies. The tests, which are administered in connection with advisory interviews, comprise:

Test A. Word knowledge test. This test comprises 48 multiple choice questions and is designed to test vocabulary. Each question comprises an English word and four translations for the student to choose from.

Test B. Structures. This test comprises 38 multiple choice questions and focusses on comprehensive school grammar. It comprises short English sentences with one or more words missing. Under each sentence are four suggestions for filling the gap.

The standardization of the tests is illustrated in the following table.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of groups which had just concluded the various grades of adult education

Grade No.	Test A (word knowledge)		Test B (grammar)	
	$\bar{x}$	s	$\bar{x}$	s
Grade 6	19,3	6,1	15,1	5,1
Grade 7	28,0	8,6	18,7	5,9
Grade 8	34,2	8,9	22,1	6,0
Grade 9	37,1	6,8	24,5	6,2

The results obtained by the students in the autumn term 1973 were as follows:

	$\bar{x}$	s
Test A	26,2	8,2
Test B	17,3	6,5

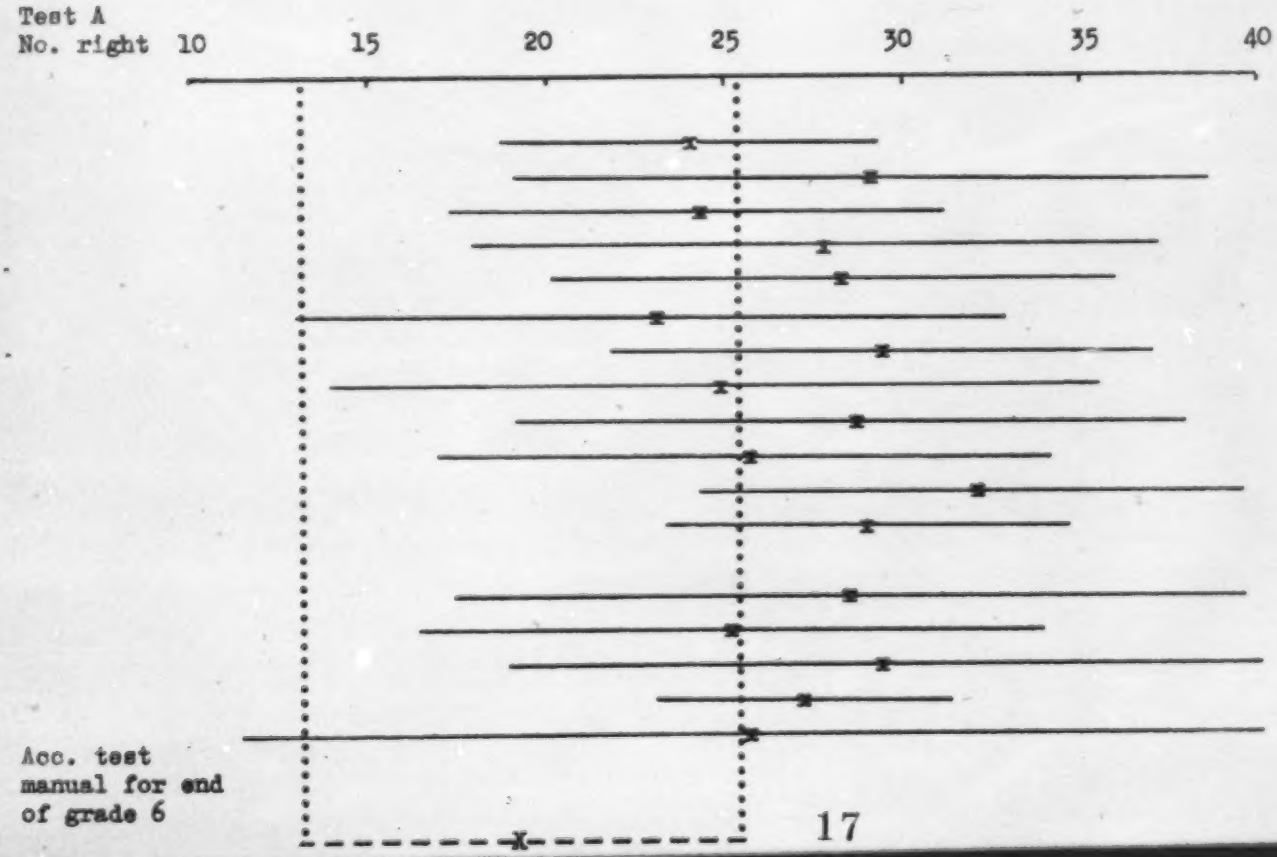
There is a difference between the results of the various teaching groups. Comparing the means one finds that the difference between the best and worst groups in Test A is 12,5 units while in Test B it is 9,9 units.

An assessment was made of the test achievement of each individual student according to the test manual. It transpired that 48 per cent of the students taking the test had chosen the right level, while 14 per cent ought to have chosen a lower level and 38 per cent a higher one. Thus according to our findings, 52 per cent ought to have chosen a higher or lower level than they actually did.

The results obtained by the students in the spring term 1974 were as follows:

	$\bar{x}$	s
Test A	27,2	8,9
Test B	17,4	6,6

These results are illustrated by the following diagram.



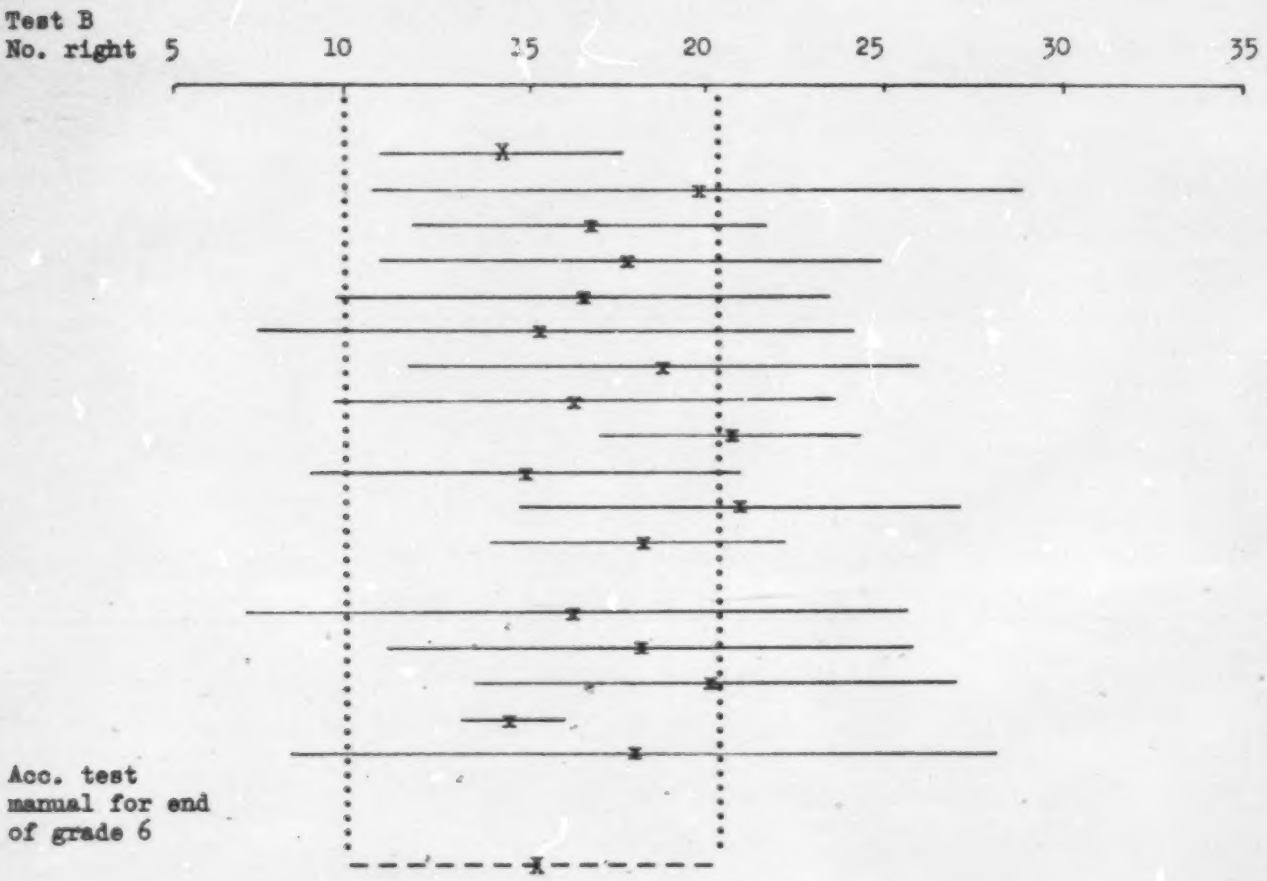


Figure 3. Means and standard deviations in Tests A and B for groups in the spring term 1974.

As can be seen from the above figure, both means and standard deviations differ from one group to another. The difference in means between the best and worst groups is 9,1 units for Test A and 6,5 units for Test B. An assessment of each individual student's test results according to the test manual showed that 19 per cent ought to have chosen a lower level and 39 per cent a higher level to begin with. The remaining 42 per cent had chosen the right level according to the manual.

B. The teachers' descriptions of the instruction

Data were collected from the teachers by means of questionnaires and personal interviews.

Most of the teachers of English have taken a L.A. degree followed by a year at a school of education. The majority have qualified since 1968. A few teachers have taken the adult education line at the Stockholm School of Education. The others have received a certain amount of educational training at courses and on study days or else no special training at all. Many teachers have had previous experience of adult education. The actual length of that experience varies, but the majority have taught adults for up to five years.

Few of the teachers in our study also teach in adult high schools during the daytime. Practically all of the teachers have only one group, and some of them are also active in youth education.

The median age of the teaching personnel was 34,8 years.

I. The questionnaire study

The questionnaire study includes 53 teachers teaching at middle and/or senior level during the evenings in the autumn term 1973 and the spring term 1974 at adult high schools in Stockholm.

An initial questionnaire was administered in the autumn term 1973 and the spring term 1974 to the teachers then beginning the first term of a course. This questionnaire included items concerning background data and the teachers' views on overriding and specific aims, the planning of teaching etc. There were also a number of questions about the teachers' opinion of their groups, regarding their motives for studying, their initial ability etc.

Teachers in municipal adult education are confronted by a host of problems.

- Students have varying objectives.
- Students have varying levels of previous knowledge.
- Comprehensive school subject matter has to be assimilated in about half the time it takes youth education to cover the same ground.
- Teaching is mostly done using the same textbooks and materials as in youth education.

These problems can be contrasted with the following conditions:

- Both the student attending for social reasons and the student reading to improve his qualifications must be given the same opportunities of realizing their expectations.
- Students who are less well placed in terms of initial ability expect to have the same opportunities of meaningful study as those of superior initial ability.
- It is natural for students to want their studies to proceed at a rate which gives them time to assimilate everything. To this end, however, older students require a slower rate of progress than the younger ones.
- Adult students are most anxious to learn things that will be of practical use to them, and they often have a very exact idea of the knowledge they need and why they need it.

Teachers' views of the overriding aims of adult education

In the reports of Government Commissions on adult education and in the general debate on the subject, certain arguments recur in favour of greater investment in vocational adult education. These arguments include the reduction of the educational gap within and between generations, improvement of general educational standards, more rewarding leisure and so on.

Municipal adult education follows the comprehensive school curriculum. In its general statement of aims, that curriculum emphasizes that instruction must promote the allround development of the student and in doing so inculcate knowledge and develop skills. Teaching, then, is aimed at providing more than mere facts and insight.

In the questionnaire the teachers were asked to state the extent to which they believe that municipal adult education can contribute towards the realization of these general aims.

Briefly, the teachers believe above all in the ability of municipal adult education to enrich the leisure of adult students, to reduce the educational gaps between and within generations and to raise general educational standards.

On the other hand teachers are less convinced of the ability of adult education to help the individual to adjust to the labour market or to even out inequalities of income between different social groups.

Work in the classroom

a. The goals of English teaching

In addition to the general aims stated in the curriculum, there are also special aims applying to the teaching of each particular subject. The teachers were asked what importance they attached to the aims for English, in terms of the teaching time they devoted to those aims. The results are shown in the following table concerning the percentage allocation of teaching time to different instructional aims.

Table 3. Allocation of time between teaching aims. A comparison of the first and second terms

Aims	Av. percentage of teaching time	
	First term	Second term
Comprehend and understand cultivated speech	31	28
Express oneself in speech in simple everyday situations	26	25
Read and understand an easy text	24	24
Express oneself in writing to some extent	12	14
Have a general knowledge of the cultural and social conditions of the English-speaking countries	8	9

The aim to which most time has been devoted during both terms has been for the students to learn to comprehend and understand cultivated speech. On average, slightly more time was devoted to this aim during the second term. On average roughly the same amount of time is devoted in both terms to teaching the students to express themselves in speech and to read and understand an easy text. Life and institutions (to have a general knowledge of the cultural and social conditions of the English-speaking countries) are the subject aim to which least time has been devoted during both terms.

Thus the apportionment of time between the various aims would seem on the whole to be the same during the first and second terms of a course.

b. Allocation of time between different subject items

There are several different subject or teaching items which have to be gone over and practised in the course of a lesson. The teachers were asked to try to judge the percentages of teaching time occupied by the items listed below. The following table shows how the teachers distribute their lesson time between different teaching items.

Table 4. Allocation of time between subject items. Comparison of the first and second terms

Subject items	Av. percentage of teaching time	
	First term	Second term
Review of text	24	22
Review of grammar	16	16
Questions on text	19	20
Questions on grammar	12	13
Revision or practice of text and grammar by means of listening, reading, spoken and written exercises of different kinds	29	28

The allocation of lesson time between different subject items is practically the same for both terms. During both terms the greatest amount of time has been devoted to work on text reading and the least time has been spent on grammar questions. Most lesson time has been spent on exercises of different kinds.

c. Working methods

The following table shows the working methods used by the teachers with the groups included in the survey.

Table 5. Working methods

Working methods	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
a. Teacher-directed class instruction	48	2	-
b. Group work (more than 2 students)	2	17	24
c. Group work (2 students, e.g. practice in pairs)	16	24	8
d. Group instruction (after streaming)	-	7	40
e. Individual work (students doing the same tasks separately)	15	28	6
f. Individual work (students working separately on individual tasks)	2	18	27

As can be seen from the table, English lessons normally take the form of teacher-directed class instruction. Of course, this instruction can vary a great deal in terms, for instance, of methods and student activity.

Group work with two students (practice in pairs etc.), an extremely useful technique for language teaching, is used fairly extensively,

while group work involving more than two students is less common. About half the responding teachers do not employ this latter method at all. Several teachers have observed that time is too short for any extensive use of group work, and shortage of time is probably also the reason for the neglect of individualization in adult education. Group instruction of streamed classes hardly occurs at all. Nor does separate work on individually given tasks appear to be very widespread (except with two teachers). More scope on the other hand is given to individual work with students doing the same tasks. In their remarks, however, the teachers point out that these exercises are mostly done in the form of homework, due to the limited time available in class.

Commenting on this question as a whole, many teachers have pointed out that time is too short to permit experiments with new work routines.

Desiderata from teachers concerning the teaching of English

The questionnaire included on question inviting the teachers to put forward their own desiderata concerning the teaching of elementary school English in evening classes. Here are some of the viewpoints received.

- Better advance information for students, among other things concerning the initial knowledge required, the rapid pace of studies, the vast quantities of homework and the generally demanding nature of the course.

- Smaller groups. One teacher taking a beginners' group observed: "Some groups can start off with 40 members. Those in charge are prepared for half of them to give up, and no wonder." Asked what number of students they thought was the maximum permissible per class in order for teaching to have any meaning, 18 teachers replied that they could accept up to 20 students per group, 8 considered 15 students the maximum and 3 teachers did not want more than 10 students per group. 3 of the teachers on the other hand were prepared to have up to 25 students in a group.

- The same initial qualifications on the part of the students. Many teachers considered this an important prerequisite of meaningful instruction.

- More teaching time. There is a pressing shortage of time at present. Many teachers find it impossible to individualize their instruction, do group work and brighten up the lessons in the time now available. Other teachers would like to see time specially allotted for pronunciation practice. A larger number of low-speed courses are proposed, so that teachers can find time during their lessons "to be human instead of merely stuffing the students full of instruction". Evidently the shortage of time often forces teachers to cut down the amount of reading and to omit elements of grammar. This in turn leads to a reduction of standards. One of the first steps taken by most teachers when they see that their teaching is not going to go according to shcedule is to advise weaker students to apply for auxiliary instruction. Another frequent recourse is to suggest to weaker students that they should take another course.

- More utilisation of auxiliary instruction.

- Teaching materials more closely adapted to the needs and interests of adults.

A special survey which we undertook of English textbooks revealed deficiencies in this respect. Among other things, adult students often find the reading passages childish and unrealistic.

- More self-instructional materials.

- Tape recorders and tapes which the students can borrow and take home with them. There should be enough of both for all students.

- A 2 or 3-week introductory course in basic Swedish grammar. In view of the large numbers of immigrant students taking these courses, teachers refer to the importance of students also being more or less equally placed in their initial command of Swedish.

- Better support and assistance for students concerning the planning of their studies. More study guidance.

- More student welfare amenities. Several teachers refer to the need for closer involvement of teachers and school management in social welfare activities on behalf of students. The student needs encouragement from the teacher and he needs help in attaining greater self-confidence. Contact between the students themselves is also referred to as a vital factor which should if possible be increased. One teacher suggests joint parties as a solution.

II. The interview survey

The questionnaire survey has been supplemented by personal interviews of teachers.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following factors in the light of the teachers' experience of a completed course:

- The result of the course
- Problems which have occurred
- Changes occurring during the course

Altogether 27 teachers were interviewed who had completed a course at middle or senior level at the end of the autumn term 1974 or the spring term 1975.

Teaching and its results

In this study we were interested in the way in which the teacher plans his instruction and in the way in which it is adjusted to the limited number of periods that characterizes municipal adult education. We asked the teachers what they thought it was important to cover during lessons and what they left the students to practise at home.

The teachers considered it most important to cover the following items during lessons:

Review of text, words and pronunciation (20 teachers)
Grammar (16 teachers)
Oral practice (15 teachers)
Listening practice (11 teachers)

As can be seen, the review of text and grammar is given priority by teachers in their allocation of lesson time. This is followed by conversation, usually based on the set reading passage. Most listening practice involves the use of tapes.

It is above all written practice that students are left to do at home. The learning of vocabulary and the completion of various translation and grammar exercises in practice books and stencils are also important ingredients of home work.

We may therefore conclude that lessons are mainly devoted to listening and oral practice. Of these two items it is above all oral practice that serves to activate the student. Homework is devoted to applied exercises and to reading and written work.

We also asked the teachers to assess their students' achievements with reference to the goals of teaching. The replies to this question are summarised in the following table.

Table 6. Teachers' assessments of student achievement with reference to the goals of teaching. No. teachers: 25

Goals	Ranking order				Median
	I	II	III	IV	
To listen to English	13	8	4	0	1,46
To speak English	0	4	9	12	3,44
To read English	12	11	2	0	1,55
To write English	0	2	10	13	3,54

Note: The goal best achieved by the students ranks as I, that achieved next best ranks as II, and so forth.

Thus the goal which the teachers believe the students to have achieved best is the ability to understand spoken English and to read English. Next comes the students' ability to speak English themselves, while the poorest of their accomplishments is their use of written English.

The directions included in the curriculum state that first and foremost students must learn to comprehend, speak and understand the foreign language. Comparing this with the answers to our question, we find that the results obtained by the students are not altogether in line with the underlying intentions of the curriculum. The goal of

"expressing themselves in the spoken language in simple everyday situations" is that which the students attain least. Roughly the same result was obtained regarding the ability of the students to write English, but on this point the curriculum merely says that they are to be able to express themselves in the written language "to some extent".

The teachers thought that the level of activity among the students had been relatively good. Most of them were pleased with their students and considered that it had been possible to activate all of them. Some teachers had had the opposite experience, however. Their groups had been difficult to get started, they were "sluggish". Two of the teachers who had had two groups thought that things had gone well in one group while the other had been difficult to activate.

Many teachers were dissatisfied with their students' achievements. About half of them thought that the students had not assimilated the instruction properly or that the degree of assimilation varied a great deal within the group. Some teachers were perfectly satisfied with results in their groups. They thought that their students had done everything that could be expected of them and that they had assimilated the instruction properly.

Apart from cognitive aims, the elementary school curriculum also includes such aims as fostering the personal and social development of the students. In this series of interviews we raised the social aspects of teaching, especially contacts between the students. Perhaps this question is best answered by the students themselves, but it is also interesting to hear the teachers' views on the subject.

Our first question was how the students had got on together. Judging by the teachers' replies, contact between the students varied from group to group. A couple of teachers thought that their students had got on very well together, while two others had observed a certain fragmentation of their classes into groups. Most of the teachers, however, thought that their students had got on well or fairly well together. Teachers varied in their knowledge of relations between their students. It was clear that some had a very close personal knowledge of their groups.

Another aspect of contact between the students concerns the amount of effort made by the teacher to help them to get to know one another. The replies to our questions revealed that more than half the teachers (15) had done little or nothing to this end, while the others had tried various expedients. Some teachers replied that an appropriate choice of working methods could improve contact between the students. Others had arranged get-togethers outside school hours or made other attempts to stimulate contact between the students.

This part of the interview ended with a question as to whether the teachers considered the social aspects of instruction an important consideration in adult education. The great majority replied in the affirmative. Some of them thought that the social side of teaching was neglected and that only the cognitive aspects of adult education had hitherto been taken into consideration; attention should now be given to other aspects as well. Their view was that the adult high school clientele today was different from what it had been when municipal adult education was first introduced a few years ago. Teaching should therefore make better provision for other educational aims besides those of a cognitive nature. Some teachers attached importance to the social aspects of adult education on the grounds that a pleasant climate in the classroom was conducive to better learning.

There were also two reservations concerning this aspect of teaching. Some teachers were of the opinion that adults are often anxious to safeguard their privacy and that they can demur at getting to closely involved with other members of the class. The teachers were unwilling to force any such involvement upon them.

Problems

Most of the teachers when interviewed referred to the students' prior knowledge (or lack of it), late-comers to the class and, to some extent, immigrant students as a source of teaching difficulties. These factors have a direct bearing on the teacher's organization of lessons.

The problem of variable ability, which is regarded as a serious problem, had in some cases been solved by letting the absolute beginners set the pace, while other teachers adjusted their teaching to the average student, who generally has some previous knowledge of the subject.

New students clearly presented problems to the teachers in certain cases. For one thing the teacher had spent one or two terms teaching the class to work in a particular way, so that the class was attuned to the teacher's methods. When new students joined the class, the teacher was forced once again to explain how the books were to be used, how the students were to set about doing their homework, how they would be tested on their homework and so on. This information had to be reiterated in order to give the newcomers a chance of finding their feet in the class. Secondly, the new students could have a better or worse command of the subject than the established members of the class, and it took time for the teacher to investigate this point. The teacher might then have to revise things which the rest of the group had already done, because there might, for example, be gaps in the newcomers' grammatical knowledge.

The teachers were less unanimous in their replies to a question concerning the way in which the new students affected the class. Some of them thought that things had worked out quite smoothly and that the newcomers had fitted into the group without much difficulty. Others said that the atmosphere in the class had changed and that the newcomers had been left out of things somewhat.

The participant survey conducted under the project revealed that about 17 per cent of the students who started the first term's course were immigrants. The proportion of immigrants varied a great deal from one group to another. There were some groups with no immigrants at all, while others had a sizeable immigrant contingent. This made it important to investigate whether the size of the immigrant contingent could have any effects on the way in which a class was taught.

Most of the teachers who had had immigrants in their class thought that they had influenced the conduct of teaching. The immigrants had difficulties which were not shared by the Swedish students. They often had trouble with pronunciation and translation. Other problems of a non-learning nature had also arisen. There were some groups where it had been difficult to persuade the Swedish students to accept the immigrants because the teacher had sometimes had to go to some lengths to explain things to them.

Changes occurring during the course

More than half of the teachers (16 out of 27) stated during the interviews that they had been forced to revise their plans, for the simple reason that the students had found the original programme too demanding.

More often than not the changes thus made involved the omission of certain chapters in the textbook. Instead time had been spent on a more detailed presentation of new subject matter, more reading and grammar, preparation and applied exercises. Some teachers said that they had got through the book according to plan but that they had had to leave out extra items they had planned, such as material over and above the textbook. It was exercises of this kind that the students wanted more of in their evaluation of courses.

Some of the teachers who had not deviated from their original plan argued that the plan had worked well in their classes and that the difficulties arising had not been of such a kind as to require a change of plan. Some other teachers put forward the argument that it was important to stick to the original plan so that students who had been absent would know what the others had done and what the homework was. In some cases this principle had involving forcing the pace somewhat.

At the end of each term of a course, the course was evaluated in the groups concerned. The purpose of this evaluation was to review the work done in a group during the past term by asking the students for their opinions concerning the arrangement and conduct of the course.

Questions were also included on other matters of importance to an adult student. The main sectors covered by this course evaluation were:

- textbooks and other material,
- the use made of teaching time,
- rate of progress and homework,
- prior knowledge of the subject, i.e. the respondent's and the other students'.

After each course evaluation had been completed, the teachers were given summaries of the replies received from their classes, although the comments on the questions were omitted. It was then up to the teachers to decide what use to make of the results. We therefore considered it important to investigate what use if any the teachers had actually made of the results of the course evaluations. In the interviews they were asked concerning their attitudes to the evaluations and also concerning the influence which the evaluations had had on their teaching.

The majority of the teachers (18 out of 27) had made certain alterations to their teaching in the light of the results of the course evaluations. These changes were as follows:

- 5 teachers had given the students more stencils,
- 4 teachers had used more tapes and other kinds of AV-material,
- 4 teachers had introduced translation exercises,
- 3 teachers had put more emphasis on grammar,
- 3 teachers had had more conversation,
- 2 teachers had revised their allocation of teaching time between the various items,
- 2 teachers had introduced group practice and practice in pairs.

Thus the results of the course evaluations had produced changes in both the content and the design of teaching.

The course evaluation experiments conducted as part of this project can be described as relatively successful. Teachers are on the whole positive in their reaction, and the evaluations have led to certain changes in their teaching.

C. Student opinions of the teaching

Course evaluations are undertaken every term to investigate the students' experience of the instruction.

These evaluations are conducted in questionnaire form and principally contain questions concerning the following:

- information received by the students,
- the content and conduct of the course (material, the use made of lesson time, the availability of guidance from the teacher, homework, rate of progress etc.),
- assessment of the respondent's previous knowledge and of that of the other students.

There are fixed alternative answers to most of the questions, but each question is open-ended in sofar as the student is free to make additions or remarks of his own.

The results show that

- most students would like to have more practice material to work on at home and they would like more use to be made of AV-material of different kinds, newspapers, brochures and stencils during lessons;
- most students would like to have more activities of different kinds during lessons, especially in the way of applied exercises;
- speaking and writing are the teaching aims which students feel have been least provided for during the term. In their remarks on the questions they frequently call for more conversation and speech practice;
- about a quarter of the students find the pace too hard. This is particularly the view taken by older students and by those gaining low marks;
- barely one-third feel that they have had too much homework. Those who do think so are to a great extent identical with those who think that the pace of work is too hard;
- about a quarter of the students thought that there were great differences of initial ability in the group. This has affected the teaching in various ways. It was evident from the remarks made by the students that many of those with inferior previous knowledge of the subject felt neglected.

The results suggest that those who have completed the course are relatively satisfied. Most of them feel that the course has come up to expectations. One is struck by the demand shown by these students for more material and for more exercises and activities of different kinds during lessons. Both the answers to the questions and the remarks volunteered by the students point above all to a need for oral training. The questionnaires and interviews among the teachers also showed that it was difficult to obtain satisfactory results in the use of spoken English. In some cases these difficulties are aggravated by the large size of the groups.

Older students and students with poor marks tend particularly to find the rate of progress and the amount of homework a strain. Many students find the pace too hard on account of the limited teaching time available and the great volume of subject matter which the syllabi prescribe for each term. This is a state of affairs which will have to be looked into and rectified. Otherwise there is a serious risk of the students who are under strain discontinuing their studies. Many of them are advanced in years and have had little basic schooling, so that by definition they belong to a top priority group where recruitment in adult education is concerned.

Another problem which deserves attention is the variation of prior knowledge of the subject. Those who have little or no knowledge of the subject when they join the class feel inferior to those who know more and who are therefore liable to dominate proceedings in the classroom. This creates a serious drop-out risk.

When interpreting these findings it is important to bear in mind that they are only based on about two-thirds of the students taking part in the course during the term. Interviews of a selection of those who discontinued their studies suggest that their attitude to the teaching tends to be more negative than the attitude taken by the respondents. Thus information from those who have discontinued their studies provides an important supplement to the course evaluations when attempting a total appraisal of the teaching.

A questionnaire containing open-ended questions was used to supplement the information supplied by the course evaluations concerning the teaching of English.

The results thus obtained concur with other experience in the course of the GHUV-project in that the teacher is shown to play a very important part in adult education, not only as a fount of knowledge but also by engineering a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom.

Contact between the students themselves appears to vary extremely widely from one class to another. There are some classes where the students know each other well and feel that they belong together, while in other classes they hardly know each other - an alarming situation which demands action.

Concerning the content of teaching, many students underline the importance of spending as much time as possible during lessons on learning to speak English. In some cases this is made difficult by relatively large groups, which prevent the individual student from getting the desirable amount of practice. The students are overwhelmingly positive in their attitude to the instruction.

D. Drop-outs

The purpose of the GHUV-project is to evaluate municipal adult education from the viewpoint of the educationally underprivileged, i.e. persons with only a short period of basic schooling behind them. The project is aimed at an investigation of the content and conduct of teaching and of the ways in which they are experienced by students and teachers. Students who discontinue their studies are therefore an important group for the purposes of the project.

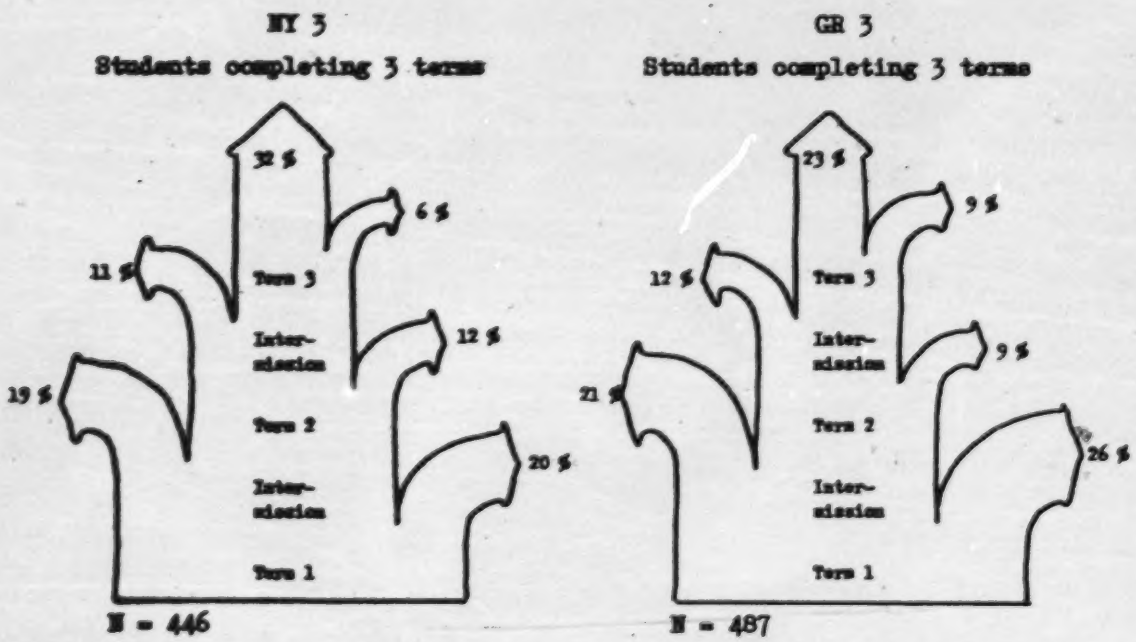
One of the main points of inquiry in this project concerned the reasons why students discontinued their studies. Efforts have been made to investigate this point by personally interviewing the students concerned.

Drop-out rates

Particulars concerning the students discontinuing their studies have mainly been collected from the teachers taking the various groups. The drop-out category has been made to include students commencing the course (i.e. coming to at least one lesson) but leaving it prematurely. Those who changed groups of schools have not been registered as drop-outs. Drop-out figures have been collected for all the terms during which the various courses have been in progress, both during and between terms. Among other things, the results obtained point to the following:

- Only about one-third or less of the students starting a beginners' or elementary school English course in Stockholm (evenings only) during the autumn term 1973 or the spring term 1974 completed their studies in the time for which the course was planned to last.

The following figure illustrates drop-outs from the three-term beginners' course (NY 3) and the three-term elementary school course (GR 3) as distributed between the various terms and intermissions.



Note. The arrows pointing left refer to drop-out rates during intermissions, while the arrows pointing right denote drop-out rates during termtime.

Figure 4. Drop-out rates.

- Most drop-outs occurred during the first term of the course, especially during the very first weeks of that term. Many students also discontinued their studies during the intermission between the first and second terms of the course. Drop-outs were less common among students in their second or third term. Students joining a group during the second or third term showed the same drop-out rate as students in the first term.

- Drop-out rates varied widely between the different groups. One three-term beginners' course had only a 22 per cent drop-out rate from beginning to end, while another lost 93 per cent of its students.

Drop-out frequency has been studied in relation to a number of accessible variables, viz group size, type of school and changes of teacher during the course, in the hope of finding an explanation for these differences. The clearest result was obtained by comparing drop-out rates in differently sized groups:

- A larger proportion of students discontinued their studies in the larger groups, i.e. groups of 20 or more.

Causes of drop-outs

One's main question concerning these drop-outs is of course the reason for their occurrence. Many surveys undertaken in a bid to identify the causes of drop-outs have shown that they are often located outside the teaching situation. More recent research on the subject has caused criticism to be levelled at surveys of this kind for merely resulting in the enumeration of causes of drop-outs. Instead it is now said that drop-outs should be considered the result of several contributory factors.

Interviews of students who discontinued their studies during the first term

So far under the GHUV-project, two series of interviews have been conducted to elucidate the causes of drop-outs. The first series involved 25 students who had discontinued their studies during the first term. The purpose of these interviews was exploratory, the aim being to find fields of inquiry of relevance to those who had discontinued their

studies and to ascertain whether these students presented any common characteristics or patterns. The interviews were relatively informal and were tape-recorded. Apart from the subject of discontinuation of studies, they also included questions on the arrangement and content of teaching, the teacher, the other members of the class, relations within the class, examinations and marks.

Among other things, the results revealed the following:

- often several factors combined to bring about the discontinuation of studies. About half of those interviewed attributed the discontinuation of their studies to changing circumstances, e.g. sudden illness or travel involved by their work. The others had decided to give up after some time, either (for example) because they were dissatisfied with some aspect of the teaching or because they found that they were having difficulty in keeping up;

- it was very common indeed for drop-outs to be connected with dissatisfaction with the teaching situation, usually with regard to the teacher or the pace of work;

- the ability of the students to find their feet in the teaching situation is to a great extent dependent on the teacher. Many interviews served to show how important it is for the teacher to have the knack of adjusting the standard of difficulty to the ability of the students and of sensing whether they have understood or not. Just over half the students were satisfied with their teachers. The remainder were emphatically dissatisfied.

Interviews of students who discontinued their studies during the second term

The second series of interviews involved students who had discontinued their studies during the second term. Altogether 28 persons were interviewed. Roughly a third of these had joined the course in the second term, while the remainder had attended from the very outset.
The questions put to the interviewees were based on findings obtained in the first series of interviews. Certain questions asked in the first series were therefore excluded from the second because they were now considered less relevant, while others were given closer attention. The latter applied particularly to the relations of the drop-out students with the teacher and the rest of the class.

The 28 interviews show how unique each person is and in how many different ways the study situation can be experienced. Despite these differences, however, there were many viewpoints which cropped up again and again in the interviews and which made it possible to pinpoint a number of critical factors:

- The lack of community between the drop-outs and the rest of the class is one of the most palpable shortcomings of the teaching situation.
- The great majority of the students who discontinued their studies had had difficulty in keeping up with the rest of the class.
- Only a few of the drop-outs were completely satisfied with the instruction.
- A quarter of the drop-outs were explicitly dissatisfied with the teacher.

Conclusions

The results of the second series of interviews support the findings from the first series: even if the persons interviewed give external reasons such as illness, overtime etc. for the discontinuation of their studies, the interviews show that drop-outs are very often bound up with dissatisfaction over different aspects of the teaching situation. Several interviews conveyed the impression that the external reason had simply been the final factor prompting the discontinuation of studies. There had been a latent risk of discontinuation, and when a change occurred in the student's outward circumstances, e.g. illness, this change was found to present such a major obstacle that the student left the course. This supports the view that drop-outs are generally due to a combination of causes.

E. Summary

Most of the students attending English classes in municipal adult high schools during the evening are women. The ages of both male and female students vary widely. About 17 per cent of adult students are immigrants.

Most students are gainfully employed and are studying out of general educational interest. Outward circumstances have prevented them from indulging this interest previously. Their prior knowledge of the subject varies considerably.

Very often the heterogeneity of these groups creates serious teaching problems. The time available for direct teaching is about half that available in youth education, and most teaching materials are not adapted for adults. The commonest form of instruction is class instruction,but group work (practice in pairs) also occurs to some extent. Most teaching time is devoted to comprehending and understanding the spoken language and to practising the use of the language in simple everyday situations.

The median age of the teachers is lower than that of their students.

Only a few teachers have been specifically trained for adult education.

Despite the formidable problems they have to contend with, the teachers are usually very happy working in adult education.

One of the desires expressed by the students on the subject of teaching was to be given as much opportunity as possible of speaking the language. But, as the students themselves remark, classes are too large for this to be possible to the extent desirable. Students also call for more material to work with. Older and weaker students find homework and the rate of progress a strain. Reference is also made to variations of initial ability. On the whole, however, the majority of students are positive towards the instruction received, though when appraising their reactions on this point one should bear in mind that several students broke off their studies. This is in fact one of

the most serious problems in municipal adult education. The reasons for drop-outs are numerous and complex. Clearly, to some extent they can be put down to such natural causes as change of address, illness, new working conditions etc. But in many cases the reason undoubtedly lies in the teaching process and a lack of realization of its implications. One of the most important tasks of the GRUV-project will be to identify any shortcomings in the instruction and information given, so that they can be duly rectified.

APPENDIX

Reports from the project (in Swedish only)

No. 1 Borgström, L. & Bromsjö, B. (1975). Municipal adult education. Its background and early development.

No. 2 Borgström, L. (1975). Project description.

No. 3 Svensson, A. (1975). Adult students taking English at elementary school level.

No. 4 Olsson, K. (1975). English for adults. Part I: Presentation of teacher questionnaires.

No. 5 Borgström, L., Bromsjö, B. & Svensson, A. (1975). English textbooks.

No. 6 Svensson, A. (1976). English for adults. Part II: Presentation of teacher interviews.

No. 7 Munthe, C. (1976). Drop-outs from English courses. Part I: Interviews of students who broke off their studies.

No. 8 Borgström, L. & Jonsson, H. (1976). Drop-outs from English courses. Part II: Statistics.

No. 9 Munthe, C. (1976). Drop-outs from English courses. Part III: Interviews of students who broke off their studies.

No. 10 Borgström, L., Bromsjö, B. & Svensson, A. (1976). Evaluations of English courses: English 1.

No. 11 Bromsjö, B. & Svensson, A. (1976). Four questions to adult students of English.